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OBSERVATIONS
ON
DR. PALEY'S VIEW
OF THE
EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

PRICE ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.



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OBSERVATIONS
ON
THE PRINCIPLES
OF
CHRISTIAN MORALITY
AND
THE APOSTOLIC CHARACTER:
OCCASIONED BY
DR. PALEY'S VIEW
OF
THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

Τὰ ὅλα εὐαγγέλια νερηθῶμεν, καὶ μηδὲν αὐτῶν παῖτσῶμεν.—Καὶ μηδὲν ἰὼν
ἐν αὐτοῖς, ἀπιστία ταρασσούσῃ τοὺς οὐκ εἰδότας συνιέναι τῶν λεγομένων,
ταραζώμεν.

Let us apply the entire of the Gospel to our improvement, and treat
nothing of it lightly.—Let us not perplex any thing by doubts, which
tend only to confuse those who have not the ability to comprehend,

ORIGEN PHILOCALIA, Chap. II.

BY
THE REV. PETER ROBERTS, A.M.

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1796.

To the Rev. G. W. Roberts

From the Author with
his best respects



OBSERVATIONS,

&c. &c.

WHATEVER pleasure the search after religious truth may afford, whatever the gratification may be, which arises from successful labours, it affords but little to find that it is so often requisite to oppose the attacks of its enemies, and not unfrequently to guard it from the misconceptions of those, who are professedly its advocates. In publications on religious subjects, the latter is more painful, as there is always a respectability annexed to the intention of doing well, which is a title to some indulgence for a failure, and which leaves some regret for the necessity attached to the sense of duty in pointing it out. It is therefore with some concern that I perceive a necessity of taking notice of some parts of Dr. Paley's View of the Evidences of Christianity, which to me appear to detract much from the real character

ter of the Gospel and of the holy Apostles, and to concede much more to their adversaries than impartiality requires, or the strictest justice can demand.

I am very far from supposing such an intention in the author, as that of doing injury to either; but notwithstanding this, it appears to me to have been done. In perusing the chapter on the morality of the Gospel, it is scarcely possible not to feel a suspicious tendency of measured words and guarded opinion, which seem to place the two characters in security, by giving them an estimation beneath a contest. With former writers on these subjects, the morality of the Gospel was their confidence, and the Apostolic character their glory. With them I had been accustomed to consider much of this morality as a real discovery, and the christian character as combining in itself every noble sentiment, and every generous passion that can dignify a man. I had considered the sound judgment of the Apostles as superior to objection.

These are positions of no inconsiderable weight. A persuasion of their truth, and a hope

hope that the attempt may lead to their being established, have excited the wish to assert them, and will, I trust, be an apology for so doing.

I have endeavoured to avoid all unnecessary objections, and could have wished, that in a work, in other respects an useful publication, there had been less reason to take notice of it in the following particulars.

The chapter on the morality of the Gospel opens with these two important concessions.

“ In stating the morality of the Gospel as
 “ an argument of its truth, I am willing to
 “ admit two points; first, that the teaching
 “ of morality was not the primary design of
 “ the mission; secondly, that morality, nei-
 “ in the Gospel, nor in any other book, can
 “ be a subject of discovery.”

Though these concessions are prudently confined to the opinion of the author; yet in a treatise on the Evidences of the Truth of Christianity, such things cannot be too cautiously examined before they are admitted.

Concessions on one side, imply requisition on the other. It is not therefore immaterial to enquire, on what grounds these are presented in such a form. Is it that the adversaries, upon the principle that the morality of the Gospel was the primary design, have argued that its moral rules are derivable, and have been derived from nature without the help of revelation?—All that can be inferred immediately from hence is, that reason and revelation agree. Is it that they insist that a revelation of moral laws should contain something not knowable otherwise?—A moral law is a proper subject of a revelation, not only when not knowable otherwise; but when not known, or not sufficiently known. In either case the concessions were not necessary. Are they then justifiable?

In favour of the first, the author's words are these.

“ If I were to describe in a very few words
 “ the scope of Christianity, as a *revelation*, I
 “ should say, that it was to influence the con-
 “ duct of human life, by establishing the
 “ proof of a future state of reward and pu-
 “ nishment—

“ nishment—to bring life and immortality to
 “ light by the Gospel. The direct object,
 “ therefore, of the design is, to supply mo-
 “ tives, and not rules; sanctions, and not
 “ precepts. And these were what mankind
 “ stood most in need of. The members of
 “ civilized society can, in all ordinary cases,
 “ judge tolerably well how they ought to act;
 “ but without a future state, or, which is the
 “ same thing, without credited evidence of
 “ that state, they want a motive to their duty;
 “ they want at least a strength of motive,
 “ sufficient to bear up against the force of
 “ passion, and the temptation of present ad-
 “ vantage. Part II. Chap. II.

So much of this argument depends upon
 the second point admitted, that I shall, for
 the present, content myself with a few obser-
 vations. The first and most natural infe-
 rence from this passage is, that if men in ci-
 vilized society act tolerably well, it is suffi-
 cient. They can judge *tolerably well* how
 they ought to act, and they want a motive to
 their duty; that is, to act according to their
 conscience, which is *tolerably well* informed.
 To what class of ethics can such doctrine be
 referred?

referred? Whatever it may be; if it be philosophical morality, it is not christian morality. Our blessed Saviour has said, *Be ye perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*; his Apostle exhorts us to *let faith have its perfect work*, and declares, that "*without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*" But it is neither philosophical nor christian. However philosophy was at a loss for the means, it certainly, in the doctrines of its most eminent professors, (the Stoics) did propose much beyond this cheerless mediocrity, this *tolerably well* in human actions. It did propose, as its object, an approximation to a perfect being; and he who proposes less, proposes nothing. Christianity confirms the rule: how it has enabled man so to approximate, shall be considered hereafter.

It may be objected to the author's statement, and surely with great justice, that in referring the moral rules of the Gospel to *this life only*, it is confining them to a very small portion of their real extent; and that, to consider the future state merely as one of reward or punishment, is not only a very limited representation of its real nature, but one that excludes
another

another motive which is still more essential, as it must be the ultimate motive of duty, to give it perfection, the motive of *its being right*; that is, of its being agreeable to the relations in which that state will place us. Is it worthy of revelation to say, that after the trial of a few years, an eternal consequence succeeds, without assigning the connection between the trial and the consequence; or that such eternal consequence is merited by a temporary conduct independant of any such connection? All that hope or fear can do, is to *awaken the sense of duty*, to rouse the attention, and help to confirm the mind in what is right, till it acquires a sufficient strength of its own, and a more generous principle: they compel to an examination of the truth; but if they alone prevail in determining the conduct, it is compliance, not assent; a servile, and not a liberal obedience.

If the motives of hopes and fears were the primary design, it might be said, that they existed before; and though not in the same form, with very great force. They were; and are the basis of every superstition; and however they were esteemed fabulous by the
few

few who were called philosophers, by the great body of mankind, in most nations, a future state of reward and punishment was steadfastly believed. Their conception of it was not correct, but it was so far just as to be thought encouragement to the good, and terror to the wicked; that is, to those who had been of service or disservice to society. Neither is it unworthy of notice that the very period of Pagan *civilization*, as it is usually termed, was precisely that of the *corruption of morality*. In barbarous nations, superstition, habit, and strong passions, united to an interest necessarily general, are jealous guardians of established social regulations; but when the principle of duty is once questioned, every failure in the answer trenches on its force; and if with this a general inattention to others, arising from wealth and peace, gives a more particular independance to individuals, philosophy can point out no *certain* object beyond self interest. Hence it is to this period alone that the revelation of Christianity was most strictly appropriate, as being in itself a full answer, and a perfect rule, attended by a perfect sanction. Neither the rules of philosophy or of civilization have any

decisive

decisive weight beyond a *necessity* in relation to this life only ; and on this consideration is founded the necessity of the Christian Revelation, at the particular period. This is enough to suggest, that in bringing life and immortality to light, there may have been much more than a mere discovery of reward and punishment: a discovery in morality, if it be capable of discovery ; but this is denied in the following terms.

“ There cannot, in morality, be any thing
 “ similar to what are called discoveries in na-
 “ tural philosophy, in the arts of life, and in
 “ some sciences—facts, or proofs, or con-
 “ trivances, before totally unknown and un-
 “ thought of.—And the foundation of my
 “ opinion is this, that the qualities of actions
 “ depend entirely upon their effects, which
 “ effects *must all along have been the subject*
 “ *of human experience.*

“ When it is once settled, *no matter upon*
 “ *what principle, that to do good is virtue, the*
 “ *rest is calculation.* We refer actions to rules,
 “ and rules to public happiness. Now in the
 “ formation of these rules, there is no place

“ for discovery properly so called, but there
 “ is ample room for the exercise of wisdom,
 “ judgment, and prudence.”

I have stated the argument at some length, in order to lay it fully in view at once. From the description of morality given here, it must consist of rules for human conduct in life, derived from human experience, the work entirely of human prudence and discretion, without reference to any principle, on which such rules may be established, but public happiness. Something more might have been expected, which should denote a deeper research into the principles of action, and the previous disposition of the universe, on which such an experience is founded, as far as it is regular; some intimation of the consistent action of the Deity, the progress of human intellect, and the influence of the Christian revelation upon it, from which its distinct value and character might have been ascertained. Nothing of this occurs. On the contrary, the treating of morality as a science is given up; it is left to the hazardous resource of a mechanical application of the results of former trials, and estimated on the
 experience

experience of civilized society in the present age. It is indeed allowed (page 407) that, so far as it depends upon experience, the tendency of Christian morality is to public happiness; and it therefore is not strange if, as a case of experiment, after so general an application to every circumstance, a new rule should not at this day be found without difficulty; but neither is this the true method of assigning the specific excellence, or the peculiar discoveries, if such there be, of the Gospel morality. To the enlightened European, the principles, or to speak with Dr. P. the rules of action are in a great measure investigated, and the accuracy of the rule determined by application. It is not of him, whose first notions of right and wrong are acquired in a country, where they are habitually referred to in the most accurate state, and under the most perfect limitations, that it is to be demanded, whether it contains any new discovery in morals; but of the world at the time of its publication, and not less of the Tartar or Indian, of the Savage and Infidel, wherever he exists, of the present day. To all these what are the rules of the Pagan World, or of the Ancient Philosophy, that

will generally apply? What are those of Morality, as abstracted from Christianity, which even now will generally apply? What had they done in their utmost perfection, or have they done since? What are those which are generally admitted? Is it that to do good is virtue? If so, in what respect, and in what manner, and above all in what degree? What is meant by the words so used? Is it to do good *to all*, much more is it to do good for evil? Is it, as in the Gospel, to regard all as children of the same Father, as coheirs of the same blessing? Is it to go forth and teach all nations? Where it is not so, the rules are new; and so far as any rule can be new and a discovery, the Gospel rules are such. But it may be urged, and with propriety, that it is not the *rule*, but the *principle, on which it is founded*, that is the subject of a discovery. I grant it, where the rule and the principle are investigated by the same person; and yet this principle is by no means *necessarily a human experience*; for the public good being, as I hope to prove, founded in our nature, the Author of that nature may give a rule, without explaining the principle, from a foreknowledge of the effect: a rule which
may

may be derived from a view of such enlarged combinations of relations as man is not equal to. Now in this case I contend, that it is by no means necessary that the quality of an action should depend on human experience; and yet farther, that the only experience, which can determine its real quality, may be a future one: and in every such case, the rule itself is truly a discovery; that is, it includes in it something unknown before. Of this nature is the first moral precept upon record, the prohibition from eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Nay even independent of this, when a rule is given which is a modification, or a peculiar restriction, of one loosely admitted before, it may very possibly, in the latter form, be perfectly novel. To forgive injuries was accounted an humane act by some, and a pusillanimous one by others; but *to do good to them that hate us, when smitten on one cheek to turn the other*, what could be a more unexpected injunction? To give up self-defence in any case, is this a law of nature? Most decidedly it is not of this world, it includes a higher reference, and is therefore new. In like manner every effectual process unthought of before,

before, in Experimental Philosophy; and in Geometry, every proposition (in the same circumstances) is a discovery; but they are not so, strictly in themselves, but because they include some new property or relation. In Morality, every rule is founded on some relation existing, or presumed to exist; it will be *just* only so far as the relations are *actually existing*, and *immutable*; and it will be *beneficial* according, as the relations combined by the rule *do agree*. In Arithmetic there is a case exactly parallel. The theory is the work of the Geometrician. He compares the quantities, and discovers various relations, from which he deduces and delivers the rules for practice. Now of all, who make use of practical arithmetic, the number of those who are acquainted with the principles is comparatively very small. It is sufficient that the rule is laid down by a competent judge, and is found to answer the intention by experience, and yet he who receives merely the new rule for any particular purpose, were it but a more concise method of extracting the cube root, has as positively a new discovery made to him, as he who first investigated the principle, and made application,

tion, did in fact make one; and the rule is the more valuable when had without the labour of investigation, provided the authority be incontestible. And thus moral rules, that is, the precepts, may be *new*: they may be founded on true principles, and may be happily followed without any further knowledge of their origin than, that the author, if God, is infallible, and if man, has demonstrated their effect or tendency.

The question then reduces itself to the principles on which the rules are formed; that is, whether the relations, on which moral rules are founded, can be a matter of discovery. If this can be determined in the affirmative, it will then be proper to enquire, whether any such relations, unknown before, have been made known by the Gospel.

According to the Author, when one relation is established, *when it is once settled, no matter upon what principle, that to do good is virtue, the rest is calculation.* I would willingly hope that this sentence seems to convey more than was intended by it. It cannot surely be meant that it is indifferent what principle

principle the doing of good is determined by, for this would be to confound the love of God with the fear of the devil, and the sources of right and wrong, honour and infamy together. Taking these words, therefore, as intended merely to exclude the consideration of the motive, there still could scarcely be a more ambiguous sentence, or one that gives less insight into the subject. It might as well, nay with much more propriety, be said, in mathematics, a circle is equal to a square, when it contains an equal area. The rest is calculation. The question still remains, how this calculation is to be instituted from what is, and what is not already known. The application of past experience to similar circumstances is little more than hazard, to new circumstances it is a mere random experiment; there are no certain grounds, no fixed principles, to proceed with, and calculation requires these; unless indeed it be allowed that there are, (which I believe to be true) and then morality is as properly a subject of scientific investigation and discovery, as any other whatsoever.

In the very general proposition, that *to do good is virtue*, the very terms are of uncertain

tain application. The expression is peculiar to the Gospel, and is used in a sense with which Philosophy was unacquainted. That virtue was the chief good, and that the chief good was the proper object of a wise man, were taught, but as to the idea of *doing* good, in the evangelical sense, it was little known, and less regarded. And even in this sense, how difficult is it to ascertain what has a just title to the name of *good* in human actions, and especially in those which relate to society at large. The very objects to be considered as good, vary with the variations of understanding and of climate: and still more may those, which to the eye of Omniscience are good, be different from our own conceptions, because he may respect an end beyond our imagination. That in common life there is much evident I admit; but it is so from experience; and among Christians much more is so from the law of God; from which the idea, as well as the expression, is derived, and used as one generally agreed upon. The good may also vary in its extent. It may be partial good, and general evil; or general good, and partial evil. And from

of show follow you. Do now, or at all, this
(oldilla)

this another question will arise, — Which is the preferable good? I am therefore very far from thinking that all but the general maxim is the work of calculation; since the very good itself is neither apparent nor determinate in many cases, whereas it ought to be both in all. It seems to me that the maxim supposes the word good to be unequivocally and necessarily affixed to the same idea, and that idea to be universal. If so it amounts nearly to that which has usually been called a moral sense, or it is confined to a civilized state only. The latter case is indeed expressly mentioned; but it is so unworthy of a revelation, so partial and comparatively of so little use, as scarcely to deserve notice. Every state has its experience, its pride, and its interest to oppose; it has also its local circumstances and local prejudices. In the most civilized, the author admits “that some stain
 “pollutes the morals or morality of almost
 “every other teacher, and of every other law-
 “giver.” (Page 76.) And these stains affect every intercourse of life. How then does it appear, that the members of a civilized state can, in all ordinary cases, judge tolerably well how they ought to act, when the very wisest were so fallible?

fallible? If the civilized society be of Christians it involves the question, if not, it appears that the heathens did not judge sufficiently well; and therefore a perfect law, one every way consistent, was wanting, and might have been properly a constituent part of the primary design of revelation. The fact is, that a difficulty has arisen with respect to the law of nature, or a moral sense, which is affirmed to exist in a great degree of perfection by some, and is as strongly denied to have any degree of perfection by others. What has been usually called a moral sense is in truth no sense at all; it is merely a confused notion, and an imperfect inference from appearances, that have given rise to the supposition of its existence. It is in itself a partial application of the general disposition of the mind to act alike in like circumstances, and on like ground; in which, as in other respects, it is capable of improvement or depravation. Our several senses and mental faculties are alike in each man, however they differ in degrees of original acuteness, or subsequent improvement; our sensations of pleasure or pain, our appetites, our necessities,

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and most of our sympathies and antipathies, are alike also. The objects we converse with are presented in like form, and affect us with the like power. Our gratification, so far as it is necessary, is by the like means. We are reared by the like connections, and with care of the like kind, and at like periods we experience like changes. Here then are the grounds of the same conclusions, as far as they are general; they are not the work of any peculiar sense, they are the same necessary conclusions from the same necessary *data*. From hence it follows, that the concurrence will be more or less general according as the *data* are so, and according to the use made of them; different nations will agree in more or fewer conclusions, according as the circumstances from which they are deduced, are more or less general. There are some obvious qualities universally beneficial, and others as universally detrimental to mankind, whether of actions or things; and in these, when offered to notice, the agreement is uniform as to the application of them, as in the elements and the seasons, and in the passions of hatred and affection. Universal
experience

experience is also witness to cause and effect. There is no idea of * sensation, no action of man, or operation of nature, which does not suggest them; and hence some superior cause is, upon the slightest reflection, assigned by man for those operations which are beyond his power, and this so generally, that very few indeed, if any, of the human race have been found so savage as not to have proceeded thus far: It is the most simple of all analogies; and it is thus the great cause of all effect, and all existence, has, with his works, presented the knowledge of himself; so as to be obtained, not by any internal sensation, but by an immediate and primary exertion of those faculties by which all other knowledge is acquired,

Nearly allied to this mode of perceiving that there is a God, is that of perceiving that there is a future state. Universal experience

* In every sensation we first perceive the external impression on the organ of sense, and when it ceases to act, and *not till then*, we perceive the idea. These are two very distinct modes of perception, and the confounding of them is merely a sophism.

shews

shews that there is something, besides the visible frame and structure of the body, that constitutes the man; something which is the origin of all; that when the man dies, it is this something which thinks and actuates, hopes and fears, loves and hates, that has left the body; that the consciousness of affection, the life of sociability, the gaiety of imagination, and the respect of wisdom have departed together; the mover has left the machine, and its operations cease. Whither is it gone? Was it nothing? Not so. The machine without it is rather nothing. It did exist invisible, it has but changed the scene of action, and left a ponderous load behind. It is more free to suffer or enjoy. It had done evil, it deserves punishment; it had done well, it deserves reward, for there was a temptation to do evil. We reward the good, and punish the bad; the Superior Being who made us, may do so likewise. The doctrine of a future state is then a very simple analogy*; and these

* In this there is not any idea of extinguished consciousness, neither do I believe such an idea natural. The chasm in existence is as abhorrent to our feelings as it is inconsistent with the scriptures. Nothing could have been

these instances may suffice to shew the manner in which similar analogies are formed. But they shew, at the same time, that they are reflex acts of the mind. From hence may also be perceived the reason why they are so very imperfectly attained in some nations, and in so various a degree of improvement in others, why they may be acquired, neglected, and even forgotten. Where the idea of God is not revealed, the nature of the supreme power is still to be learned by analogy, and that analogy will be derived from the nature of man, and a local experience of good or ill. He will be thought to be happy as

been more absurd than St. Paul's anxiety to be with Christ, if he could not be with him till a period of many centuries after the time of his departure from this life. The case of the transformation of insects and of sleep are not in point, for in these the operations of organic life are uninterrupted. It was not in vain we were told to beware of the wisdom of this world, of philosophy falsely so called. Of all mankind surely the materialist is the least consoling. What reverend feeling is there which he does not violate? What divine energy is there which he does not debase, when without authority, and with at least a strong presumption against him, he would create a dismal pause in our being, and consign that, which was formed to act and to enjoy, for ages to a fruitless state of insensibility?

being

being superior to man, he will for the same reason be feared. Invisible and powerful, what may he not be the cause of? What form may he not assume to oppress with horror or cheer with success? A power above humanity will be limited or extended according to the sphere of information. He will be feared, and all the human passions transferred to him as they prevail in mankind; his favour sought, and his wrath deprecated by the same or more extravagant means. He who is appeased by gifts, makes an oblation, and he whose vengeance pursues his enemy to destruction, will offer a victim on the altar. The first idea will limit his works to the known horizon, and self love will endeavour to confine his favour to the connected society; and hence a local god is the favourite of all heathenism. A God of the universe requires an improved mind to be conceived. He cannot be partial, and therefore not conformable to the idea of local interest, and local passions.

In the discovery of accuracy of design, and regularity of system, in the works of the Creator; his wisdom and his goodness, (for goodness

ness is the perfection of wisdom) are unfolded: but how many gradations has the human mind to go through in order to arrive at this sublime idea?

In other respects also the portion of knowledge, common to all, is proportionably, very small; the rest depends on the improvement of our faculties, and a more extended and intimate acquaintance with the relations which do not immediately present themselves. Those of parentage, kindred, friendship, are restrained to a few persons, and even that of a clan. Sense and self are the objects of gratification alike in the infant and the savage. Education and necessity establish societies, but they are as small as necessity will permit; and in these, a removal of all opposers, and extreme revenge, are the first principles. As population increases, in the same place, these principles within the society are as necessarily restrained, and legislation succeeds to misrule. The individual will is the individual interest, and the sum of individual interests are committed to the superintendance and discretion of the wise; of those possessed of a knowledge, which each feels to be requisite, and few are

possessed of. Hence it is the general expediency that is the true principle of regular government, a principle always supposed when the general will is referred to. If the public affairs are tranquil, and more especially if the capital be so, and the population abundant, science will flourish; but if the tranquillity be disturbed, and the population much deficient, the improvements will be neglected and forgotten, and another barbarism succeed.

In the progress of the understanding, and of society, every step establishes new relations founded upon those which are original, or discovers some which *were not observed* before. The relations of Creator and creature, of a present and future state, of men as fellow creatures, of common and individual interests, have existed since mankind have dwelt upon this earth; but so far were they from being known as they really are, that we can trace the enquiry, from the rudest conjecture to the utmost refinement of rational disquisition, in the inhabitants of the present day; and consequently the duties founded on the true relations, must follow the discovery of the relations themselves.

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The idea of one God is to the heathen a discovery that shocks all his prejudices, the God of his enemy his God?—and one God of all? It is an idea that, to a rude mind, confuses by its greatness, and weakens the affection by its universality, till a higher interest is combined with it. A pure spirit is still farther from the comprehension. In society the idea of a magistrate was itself a discovery of importance, that changed the whole form of it. Whencesoever it may have been taken, it is an original relation; and its limits being ascertained, the duties are so also. The idea of equity is another. And when Mr. Locke examined into the powers of the human understanding, he made also a discovery in morality, that the knowledge of these relations must be acquired by the use of our faculties, and that morality is capable of demonstration.

The basis of all morality is, as Dr. Sykes very justly observes, *the agreement with original and invariable relations*; that is, to the original constitution of man, the world he inhabits, and the author of it. And it is true that of those *which human reason alone can attain to*, the greater part had been, by

successive labours, investigated and pointed out in the schools; but this was done only by successive labours, even as they appear in the result; and how ignorant the wisest were of the truth, in many and great respects, their contests sufficiently declare. Some original relations, it is true, necessarily claim attention as natural relations. Those to our existence, to the Creator, to man, to situation, character, and constitution, may appear, and with very different degrees of distinctness; but to allow that these *do all* appear, or *may* appear from reason alone, is to allow much more than the fact can warrant, and what the fact only can decide. The primary cause of these researches, and of the institution of all that is called morality as contradistinguished from religion, is the necessity in the first of these relations, i. e. our existence. The extreme indulgence of the appetites brings on death, and that of the passions a civil death, the destruction of society. Next to avoiding the extreme and certain evil, is the avoiding of the tendency where it is direct and evident; then that which is more remote; but neither the remote tendencies, nor the modes of prevention, can be known without a diligent attention

tention to all those relations on which such tendencies to dissolution depend. In every step of the improvement so far is the case from *the application of past experience*, that it is so *direct a testimony of its insufficiency*, that if this were true, there never could be any improvement in morality. It is because the qualities of former actions were inadequate, that others resorted to, with the hope and probability founded on a more accurate knowledge.

The great difficulty is in finding out the truly original relations, and the great danger is in assuming that as a true one, which does not exist in fact. So far then does it seem to me from being evident, that morality is incapable of discovery, that I am persuaded that very much remains still to be known, and in particular a full demonstration of the principles on which it is founded. In morality, as in natural philosophy, we make such use as we can of the materials of our knowledge, as far as we are acquainted with them. Much has been discovered by the sagacity of former ages, and worked upon and improved into a more perfect form. The progress of all know-
ledge

ledge is gradual; though there are periods where the discovery of one principle opens a new and extensive field. It has been said, that there is very little of our latest discoveries which have not been known to the ancients. But there is a fallacy in the expression. When Pythagoras maintained that the earth turned round the sun, it was left to be ascertained by Copernicus; and when Democritus asserted the gravity of attraction, the properties of this principle were still to be investigated and applied by Newton. In morality, when it was discovered that there is a superior power, and even when reason had gone so far as to conceive that superior power to have formed, and to preserve the universe, there still remained a deeper investigation to determine his attributes from his works; and when it was discovered that the perfections of man consisted in his acting conformably to the relations established in his nature, it remained for Christianity to shew how far they extended, and which were the true relations in that full extent. Again, positive evil is obvious; the tendency to evil is difficult to ascertain; and the preventative which shall effect its purpose, in a salutary manner,

manner, is no less so. This was also reserved for Christianity. While heathenism established laws founded on partial views, imperfect in their form, and inadequate to the purpose, Christianity has given such as universally apply, and are perfectly consistent and adequate. It is herein that the true intent of Christianity, as far as it relates to a moral law, is to be perceived. It was not intended to defeat or destroy; to oppose, or contradict what had been previously known, but to establish, as far as it was well founded, and to add to former knowledge; and when reason had proceeded as far as it could of itself, to give new means of research, new objects, and new relations. Nor is it the least of its advantages that it presents all the results in such a manner, as to give more knowledge to the ignorant, than the united wisdom of the world had been able to attain to. Like the sun rising on the creation, and involving all the *fainter lights* of nature and remote tradition in its superior resplendency, the irradiation of the Gospel gives to life its true character, and to human conduct, a clear prospect of its progress and its end. If ought can be a discovery, in this there is much. If it does not
change

change the reality of things, is it nothing to shew them as they really are? To banish the phantoms of imagination, to dispel the gloom of uncertainty, and supersede with perfect light the glimmerings of the celestial beam that faintly relieved the darkness of former ages; or must we, because the light is similar, confound and call them the same? So long have we been familiar with revealed knowledge, that we no longer appreciate either this, or natural knowledge justly.

Dr. Sykes, in his Treatise of the Connection of Natural and Revealed Religion, considers every moral doctrine as capable of being investigated by the natural faculties of man; but at the same time allows that there may also be discoveries in the process; and had Dr. Paley attended to a remarkable exception, he would not perhaps so hastily have asserted, that morality is not capable of discovery. "In this I conceive the great use and advantage of revelation consists, not in *discovering moral duties*, except as it *shews new relations*." (page 100 Edit. Lond. 1740). In this exception, all I contend for, as to the possibility of a discovery, is granted: and it is to be

be regretted that this able writer should have remained satisfied with this slight notice of so important a case. In another passage he observes, that "revelation does not *create* new relations, but *shews* them." (page 411.) Here also the manner in which they are shewn ought to have been observed, and to whom; and the simplicity in which they appear to those, whose understandings and circumstances were too much limited to permit them to make researches for themselves*. For whom was the boasted knowledge of philosophy? Was it for the weak and the

* At the same time the stress laid upon the discovery of new relations, or relations unknown before, is far beyond the true measure. It is in the application to common use that the great advantage consists, and even in this application of morality, with the great variety that is in character, there is not unfrequently much necessity for prudence and skill, to distinguish the weakness from the corruption of nature, the effect of terror from sincere contrition, and an honest zeal from hypocrisy and enthusiasm; to alarm the callous without oppressing the timid; to correct, to improve, and to confirm. It is not all to know how to act, and even to know there is a sufficient motive. We grow easily familiar with ourselves, and require frequent occasion of recalling and hearing our duties repeated. Without these our conviction may be very sincere, and our practice careless even in the best informed, and much more with the ignorant.

feeble, the poor and the distressed? Was it for the wide range of beings, whose wants are at variance with principle? Was it, like the Gospel, to heal the broken hearted, and to shew mercy to the transgressors? No, none of these. To abstruse for vulgar minds and at variance in its decisions, except to the few who were devoted to literary pursuits, its light was hid. The chosen few its light directed with success, but to all others it was a pillar of thick darkness, which if they followed it was to destruction. They learned to doubt and disbelieve, and they did not learn to reason justly; the restraint of superstition was taken off, and that of metaphysical texture was too fine to be strongly felt, and too delicate not to be easily broken. In arguing from the discoveries of the heathen philosophers, it has been a frequent practice to infer, from what they had suggested, the sufficiency of natural religion, as it is called, and what in public practice, is a religion that never existed. Having found in ancient writers that most of the principles of true religion have been noticed by them, it is taken for granted that this knowledge is general, in direct opposition to the testimony of every superstition upon earth;

earth; and it is taken for granted that its influence is decisive, in opposition as direct to the common practice of the whole heathen world. It is overlooked that the theory alone is not sufficient, though it were accurate; that the application to common use is perhaps a greater difficulty than the investigation of the theorem; that it is necessary, from simple principles, to combine such forms as shall be fit to subdue the grossest materials, and shape them to their best uses in the well proportioned fabric of regular society; and it is overlooked, that this is truly done only by the Gospel. In the manner of teaching of Christ himself, we do not find the abstruse speculations, or formal argument; but precepts so simple, and so clear, as at once to impress the mind with the principle, and the importance. One God and father of all, a general interest, and a general good, the multiplying of benefits by mutual regard, and lessening of evils by mutual forbearance and forgiveness. It proclaims aloud what the Philosopher veiled in mysteries, or taught only to select disciples, that there is one eternal origin of all created being, a pure spirit; not an indistinct somewhat, an undefined

cause, but such as he is; one, and alone, who gives not his glory to another; the common father of all the sons of men. If this idea was not pure among the Jews, (for they considered themselves a peculiar people); much less was it so amongst the rest of mankind, who, if any, had local Gods, which philosophy did not dare to oppose. It was therefore one great purpose of revelation, not merely to establish true relations, but *to abolish* such as were *fictitious*; the relations to false gods, and false principles of conduct. But with these I am not immediately concerned.

Having endeavoured to shew that a discovery in morals must respect relations, on which moral rules are founded; and having pointed out that, of these relations, some are so universal and obvious, as necessarily to produce a degree of conformity in actions; that others are more remote, and require great labour and ingenuity to discover them, and that in these the assistance which, in those discoverable by nature alone, revelation has afforded, is always a great blessing. I shall now take notice of some original relations which I conceive to have been really discovered by it.

Of

Of these the first I shall mention is that of man to the Son of God, on which alone the duty of faith in him as a Redeemer and Mediator, as Lord of man, and head of his church, and as judge of all men, are founded. Of these (however it might appear that the Creator is just, and whatever might have been the ideas of intermediate causes or beings, and of atonement) there is no one which reason could derive, since they do not depend on human experience.

There is also a second relation which is a principle of moral conduct, and discovered only by the Gospel; and this is, that the future state is a state of perfection. I do not speak as to reward or punishment, but of that relation of mind and temper which alone can agree with a state of perfection; a temper of entire submission to the will of God, an entire subjugation of the contentious passions, steadiness in resisting evil, and zeal in doing good. In the Gospel only is the future state truly delineated, and the terms on which it is attainable duly delivered. Of this discovery, the motives of reward and punishment seem

seem to me to be but a very small portion. It is the discovery of a fact which influences and *changes the very ground of action*. While it was opinion only, there was positive enjoyment in this life poised against a probability of a future state, which was lessened in its force by the dissensions of those who were reputed wise. It was a rational conclusion from the fitness of things, from a general survey of the world, and the powers of the mind, that these being the works of design, it argued imperfection if it did not extend farther: that it *seemed*, and it was *probable* it did; but there was *no fact*, no grounds of *certainty*, that it did, unless such traditional ones as superstition obscurely comprehended; and moreover reasoning in opposition was made to shew a probability directly the reverse. In this conflict of opinions, as in all other uncertainties, the positive advantage and enjoyment were objects of little doubt, and were the more *rationaly* pursued in *proportion to the despair* of any other. It was not therefore motives to act *right* that they wanted, but motives to act *in a different manner*, that is, motives which should throw the certainty to the other side of the question,

and

and make the certainty of future good and evil preponderate against the certainty of the present. If therefore it be true, as it certainly is, that the Gospel doctrine of a future state is agreeable to that suggested by a few learned and good men, we are not to deduce from hence that it did nothing more than they had done; since it confirmed what they could only presume; much less are we to conclude, that because they did presume it, that the Gospel had no greater effect. What they did for a few, and with a consciousness that it was but *suggestion*, nay, that it was *absolutely necessary* to have *divine evidence* for the Gospel *does* for all *with that evidence*.

With this certainty, the principle of action, the relation to which it is subjected, changes from self to the will of the Creator, because this is known, and clearly expressed, that also which he bears to man is so clearly marked, as to be the great characteristic of revelation, and a most peculiar discovery in itself, by which it is distinguished from all Philosophy. The law of the Deity is not delivered as a deduction from the fitness of things, it is given in the first instance, in form the most simple

simple and the most perfect, admitted to be such even by its bitterest adversaries.

I have already mentioned the difficulty of drawing rules from original relations, which shall effectually answer the intention of improving mankind; and have stated that the rules themselves may upon this account justly be considered as discoveries, though of a different nature, by the particular modification, and what is still of more, or indeed of the chief, importance, by giving those results, without the labour of the investigation, which the experience of nearly two thousand years has proved to be truly derived. Revelation gives also a knowledge *which had been lost*, except to the Jews. The knowledge of the origin of man from one pair, and of a second derivation from the family of Noah, a knowledge which, I apprehend, has in fact considerable influence on the mind. It brings the tie of affection closer, and strengthens the claims of humanity, and, when the poor negro crouches beneath the lash of an unfeeling master, excites a double indignation against the selfish brute who infamously heaps miseries on his helpless brother. To the family of
Noah

Noah which survived the flood, the true God was known, but their posterity corrupted their ways, and did not keep him in remembrance. All but a few having, through the neglect of religious duties, sunk into ignorance and barbarism, were therefore left to their own imaginations; and how little the imagination of man is capable of in acquiring moral, and much less religious knowledge, is the lamentable experience of a great part of the world even at this day.

It is here then that I find the full intent of the Gospel to instruct the ignorant, and to confirm the wise, to give light to them that were in darkness, to restore to them the knowledge they had lost, and the privileges they had forfeited; and by a law pure as the source from which it flows, and perfect as the system to which it is adapted, to make them fit for a futurity of bliss. To these purposes every precept of the Gospel tends, and is marked by a deep and thorough knowledge of the human heart. Not like human laws, directed to the fact, but striking at the intention; not fixing its regard on that *self* which is instinctively protected; but to the welfare

On of others, with which it may be at variance; not ~~to~~ the revenge of injury, but ~~to~~ the avoiding of giving offence; not ~~to~~ the overcoming of the evil, but ~~to~~ the prevention of its existence. Unravelling our origin and end, it discovers our true, our eternal interests, and guides us to the attainment of them; gives to man his true place in the creation, and a just and tempered sense of himself; and, that this may be done effectually, engages him in spreading this knowledge by the command of his God.

Of this moral law Dr. Paley has expressed himself in terms, that cannot in justice be passed over.

“As I wish to deliver argument rather than panegyric, I shall treat of the Gospel morality in subjection to these observations,” (viz. the two points conceded). “And after all, I think it such a morality, as, considering from whom it came, is most extraordinary;—or to place the argument *a little lower* in the scale, it is such a morality, as completely repels the supposition of its being the tradition of a barbarous age,

“ age, or of a *barbarous people*, of the religion
 “ being founded in *folly*, or of its being the
 “ production of *craft*: and it repels also, in a
 “ *great degree*, the supposition of its having
 “ been the effusion of an enthusiastic mind.”

That this anticlimax completely repels the supposition of inclining to panegyric, is perfectly evident; and did it rest here, it would have been allowed, that a solicitude for the appearance of candour might prevail so far. But when it proceeds so much farther as to call every suspicious motive into view, and to conclude with leaving a most dangerous one in part admitted; in an advocate it cannot be deemed wise, were there reason for it; and where there is none, it is doubly to be lamented. “ It repels, *in a great degree*, the “ supposition of its having been the effusion “ of an enthusiastic mind.” If it does not repel it *entirely*, what becomes of the Gospel? Is any degree of enthusiasm consistent with the character of Christ? Or has the author written too hastily to be aware of the import of his words? I believe this to be the case, and shall have several occasions to observe it.

In the chapter on the originality of the character of Christ, the idea of enthusiasm is made to rest on the choice of the line of his conduct as an instructor, which certainly shews no more than that he did not act as enthusiasts generally do. It proves nothing. Enthusiasm is an unfounded persuasion of being inspired, and this idea is completely repelled by every miracle, and every doctrine, of our blessed Lord. It is as strange, as it is unfortunate, that the conduct of enthusiasts and *enthusiasm itself* should be thus confounded, and a groundless suspicion presented as a preliminary to the doctrines.

In stating the doctrines themselves there is a similar appearance of haste. Notwithstanding the principle that morality is incapable of discovery, it is acknowledged that the precept of not resisting evil is *very original*. I believe that, taken in its proper and whole extent, it is so. "The truth is," says the author, "that there are two opposite descriptions of character, under which mankind may be generally classed. The one possesses vigour, firmness, resolution; is daring and active, quick

“ quick in its sensibilities, jealous of its fame,
 “ eager in its attachments, inflexible in its
 “ purpose, violent in its resentments.

“ The other, meek, yielding, complying;
 “ forgiving; not prompt to act, but willing
 “ to suffer, silent and gentle under rudeness
 “ and insult, suing for reconciliation where
 “ others would demand satisfaction.

“ The former of these characters is, and
 “ ever hath been, the favourite of the world.
 “ It is the character of great men.

“ The latter is poor spirited, tame, and
 “ abject. Yet so it hath happened, that,
 “ with the founder of Christianity, this latter
 “ is the subject of his commendation, his
 “ precepts, his example; and that the for-
 “ mer is so, *in no part of its composition.*
 “ This, and nothing else, is the character de-
 “ signed in the following remarkable pas-
 “ sages. Resist not evil, &c. This cer-
 “ tainly is not common-place morality, It is
 “ very original.” Page 31.

This

This is indeed very original; so much so, that could I for a moment admit it to be just, I would rest the very principle of a discovery in morality on the proof of its being that which is held forth by Christianity to imitation. But I have no right to avail myself of it. The true character, which I conceive to be very different, does indeed possess in itself all the distinguishing features of originality. Nothing could have been more opposite to the sentiments of the heathen world, than the virtues of humility and meekness: nothing more unlike the forgiving injuries from mildness of natural disposition, or elevation of mind. They arise from a very different principle, *the will of God*, and *the measure of retribution*, and that general effect which his will is determined by. The favoured character of the Gospel is not indeed the ardent spirit, so strongly described by the author, as the favourite of the world; but neither is it a tame spirited, abject character. The division itself is extremely inaccurate. These two are extremes, of which the instances are proportionably very few. It is the moderate character of which the great mass of the people

ple consists, not strictly a mean, but much nearer to it than either of the extremes; it is composed of those who weigh their passions with their interests; who, conceding somewhat with reluctance, are willing to limit their vengeance by the safety from a repetition of offence. The Christian character is none of these, and it is an abuse of the evangelic expression, *poor in spirit*, to make it synonymous with *poor spirited*, or an *abject tame spirit*. No two characters could be more distinct. An abject mind is every way a worthless one. It is not overlooked, it is deservedly despised. It bows before pride, it crouches before insolence; insensible of offence, it must be incapable of affection, and not daring to assert itself, circumvents by hypocrisy. How one who does not feel, who does not feel strongly, can be said to *forbear* and *forgive*, I am at a loss to imagine: nor can I conceive what merit there is in not resenting an injury, which leaves little or no impression. In passive courage there may be much. When the sense of duty checks the hand, and the blush of injured innocence retires in peace, when the tumult of the soul, and workings of the body, are taught to sub-

side

side by the power of brotherly love, it is then the Christian triumphs. His state on earth is a warfare. Are the *abject* fit for warfare? To contend with passions from within, and terrors from without, the censures of malevolence, the derelictions of friendship, the subtlety of the ambitious, and the fury of the cruel; not to fear them who kill the body, but following a crucified Saviour, despising the shame to consummate the victory in death? If this be *abject*, I know not what is fortitude. Was our Saviour *abject* when he reproved the vices of the Jews, and drove the unhallowed usurers from the Temple, or when in agony he cried, Not my will but thine be done; or when before Pilate, he declared his kingdom, his power, and his forbearance of exerting it? Who can read the poor spirited *abject* character, marked out as the most conformable to Christianity, without feeling the injury done to its divine Author; and in his followers, as mere men, to the boldness, the quick sensibility, the persevering zeal of Saint Paul; or read the words of the author, "*I do not know a stronger stimulus to action than envy*," page 34; and not think with a sigh of the Apostle's labours, and

and watchings, his toil, his anxieties, his tribulation, and his martyrdom? The passion of *envy* is not properly a natural or an active one. Its true origin is a consciousness of inferiority, and to become a stimulus it must be joined with, or excite, another passion: Even thus, whatever it may have done, Religion has done a thousand times more. But I will not press this farther. I do not find this abject spirit in St. Paul, whether rebuking the high priest for injustice, or claiming his privilege as a Roman; or, when following his blessed Master to the death, and exhorting the converts to fight the good fight of faith, and endure patiently to the end. The spirit of revenge does not consist with Christianity; nor is it the principle of a strong mind, save where it is esteemed a duty. It arises from an extravagant estimation of injury, and as it is the greatest obstacle to peace, is most severely prohibited.

In quoting the Author of the View of the Internal Evidence of Christianity, there is again an instance of hasty observation. How else could the following remarkable and just eulogium have been overlooked. “ How

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“ a Christian Martyr, suffering with resignation, and praying for the guilty, than that of
 “ a pagan hero breathing revenge, and destroying the innocent?” This is as just as it is well exprest.

The precept, *love thy neighbour as thyself*, is another which, in its Gospel sense, appears to me to be peculiar to Christianity. Though found in the Jewish law, that neighbour was the Jew also. It was Christ himself who made it universal. It is very different from the mere consideration of mankind as one great society; it is also very different from the heathen principle of justice. It is not a prudential maxim of moderation or benevolence, in order to obtain a return of kindnesses; a mixture of mildness and severity, recommended to those who least want it, to those who are well disposed; but a law to all, proceeding from the Divinity; and for all. And it is presented with a motive not of reward or punishment; the most liberal of all motives is urged for this most important of all social duties, *gratitude: My beloved, if God so loved us, we ought to love one another.* And it is a motive peculiar to the Gospel, and to the

the doctrine of atonement. To strict justice no gratitude is due; it is due only where strict justice is in some degree, and for a wise and benevolent reason, abated of. In the Gospel this is the death of Christ, and gratitude and love are due to him, and he directs the proof of it to be manifested in our love of others. Such love is Christian charity when it arises from such a principle. It is not indeed the complaisance of civilization; it is an excellence of higher origin and superior worth; to heathenism unknown, and by philosophy unsought. It has nothing selfish in its composition; it is neither the tool of ambition, nor the scintillation of liberality; but an active beneficent principle in the heart, which *vaunteth not itself, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil*, which refers every action to the only just principle by which it can be truly estimated, and by which it will be adjudged; that *self* so anxious for its gratification, and so jealous of its rights. Nor is this to be merely a principle. What is at first a rule, may become habit; and when just, may become passion of the noblest kind; and such ought this to be, grounded on the

relation of a Creator's goodness, and strengthened by the new one of a Saviour's love, and a Redeemer's example and enforcement. It is not that cold-blooded scanning of the best of duties, where the precision of the head is employed to mete out a Corban from the depravity of the heart; nor that affected benevolence which alone can gratify false feelings; but simplicity of mind, and earnestness in doing good to every brother in affliction, unterrified by the squalid vesture, or the uncouth expression, of real wretchedness. It is Christianity alone that has given to the larger portion of every community an unfailing source of consolation, and while I with pleasure in this instance except Dr. Paley, I must say that in some of those, who have compared its doctrines with those of paganism, there is a debasement of them that shews their extent to have been, I will not say little understood, but most certainly little attended to. How else could this peculiarity have been treated so slightly? This consideration for all those whom barbarism depraved and philosophy despised, this care for every state of life which excites all to labour for the common good as for their own;

confirms

confirms more strongly every tender tie, and places public happiness, where alone it will ever be found, in private probity, in domestic religion, and a strict observance of the primary duties to God, to parents, and to friends. He who, in this life, comes into public with a mind known to be strongly attached to these three duties, offers so many sacred pledges of his truth and honesty; and in a future state without the same principle and disposition, there could be no permanent happiness,

Two other principles peculiar to Revelation are the consideration of human depravity, as derived from the disobedience of our first parents, and that just sense of the importance of religion, that without a knowledge of God we are able to do no good thing; nor yet without his assistance. It may perhaps hurt an overweening self-conceit to acknowledge, though it is what every saint has acknowledged, that man alone is too feeble of himself to attain to that perfection which every Christian is enjoined to aim at; and it is his duty therefore to humble himself before his Maker. In his conduct he will have much to disapprove, and much to amend, in order
to

to go on from perfection to perfection, to observe the clue of passion, and destroy it in its inmost retreats. Reflecting seriously on the thoughtlessness of some, the impetuosity of others, the ignorance of our own motives, the deceitfulness of our own hearts, one cannot but be astonished at the ease with which the practice of morality is in general presumed to be accomplished; as if to know that a rule exists, and to apply it, were a matter of the greatest facility. Where there is such a presumption, this doctrine will not perhaps have its due influence; but that it is peculiar to Christianity will hardly be contested.

If we consider the heathen world as having lost the true religion, delivered by Noah to his descendants, and having invented and followed corrupt superstitions, we shall see also the great foundation of another Christian doctrine, Repentance; a sincere sorrow for having participated in error and a steadfast forsaking of it, and returning to the true God. And if we reflect upon the enormous extent of the darkness that enveloped and the corruption that brutalised mankind; the strictness of the religious

religious obligation, the absolute necessity of pure devotion, and a faithful attachment to the true God, will appear with awful conviction. To exercise these sacred duties in ourselves, and yet more to spread the truth of the Gospel abroad, and by example and instruction to bring the nations yet in ignorance to a knowledge of the mercy of God, it is not sufficient that *men in civilized society should know tolerably well how they ought to act.* It is not this mediocrity in knowledge, this respect of the few, this prudential morality, that will effect it. The law is written, and it is at every man's peril to observe it with fear and trembling, lest, in his own example, he should tend to deface the image of his Maker, and contribute to a second growth of impiety, that may draw a just and weighty judgment on the earth. That the Christian morality is perfect, is allowed; and it is the only one to which an infinite consequence could be attached, for that reason: I hope I need not insist that a perfect law was a *discovery*.

In these several doctrines, the original relations, and the secondary ones on which they are founded, are, I conceive, peculiar to revelation.

lation. The manner in which the mention of them affects the mind, appears to be similar to that in which a new rule in arithmetic, or a new process in chemistry, or a new property or principle in natural philosophy, affect it. They add to former knowledge, and facilitate the application. Simplicity and truth is in each alike the required excellence which gives them general use. The line of duty is bold, and clearly drawn. It is not the hair stroke of the casuist, but the strong delineation of plain honesty, which an upright intention is in no danger of mistaking through ignorance. On the subject of discovery I should have said less, were not the idea to be estimated more by the importance sometimes affixed to it, than by that which it can justly claim. It is time to proceed to the consideration of some other passages which I have still to discuss.

In speaking of the manner in which our blessed Lord delivered his instructions, the author says, that “ the purpose by him to be
 “ consulted, was *impression*; because convic-
 “ which forms the principal end of our dis-
 “ courses, was to arise, in the mind of his
 “ followers

“followers, from their respect to his person
 “and authority.” If by this he meant that
 the conviction of his mission being divine,
 was to arise from the testimony of his mira-
 cles, this may be allowed; but at the same
 time, the purity* of his doctrines was a testi-
 mony no less important; nor do I appre-
 hend that either respect or authority can ever
 produce conviction. They may restrain op-
 position; they may sometimes compel the ex-
 ternal appearance, but real conviction is a per-
 ception of the mind, which external circum-
 stances can neither force upon it, nor deprive
 it of; and therefore, however *the obligation to*
attend to what he taught might rest on the
 proofs of his divine authority†, its truth was
 also,

* The author has laid it down as a principle, that
 “the truth of Christianity depends on the truth of its leading
 “facts, and on them alone.” Page 395. But surely, the
 purity of the doctrines, the internal evidence, is no less
 necessary than the external. No series of facts, however
 true, could establish doctrine contrary to what is truly
 known by reason; the doctrines and facts then must *both*
 correspond, as coming from the same origin.

† I say his *divine* authority from his own words, *I say*
unto you. He was his own authority. “He produced
 “himself as a messenger from God,” says Dr. Paley,
 page 52. Is this a term for him, *δι’ ἐν κ; δι’ ἐν, for whom, and*

also to be judged by human intellect, as far as it can determine; and from these two proofs, the credit to be given to things above our comprehension was to be derived. It is essential to observe these distinctions, because it is by them we are able to mark the difference between the light of revelation, and the vapours of enthusiasm. The great evidence of the sermon on the mount is, that it is almost intuitively benevolent, wise and just, and of *universal* application. To require directions for every case in morals, is as absurd as to require a distinct rule for every area to be measured, whereas the art of measuring one triangle and one circle, is enough for most practical purposes. In morals, a few simple rules,

by whom are all things; for him who says, *He who hath me hath seen the Father*; and who is expressly excepted from the number of the mere messengers of God? Οὐ γὰρ ἀγγέλους ὑποτάξε τῇ οἰκουμένῃ. *For unto messengers (angels) he hath not put in subjection the world to come,* (Heb. ii. 5.) The term is equivocal, and to him degrading. If his authority was himself, he was *a messenger from himself*. As coming from the Father, it might have been remembered that he and his Father are one, and that however in the divine oeconomy he may, as in the creation, have been the efficient cause, he was not therefore a messenger; that is, no cause at all, but merely an instrument. The term is peculiarly applied to John the Baptist, and never to Christ, in the Gospels.

well established and honestly applied, are sufficient also. Nice examinations, how far one may go, are generally an indication of a wish to find, that there may be some apology for going a little farther than that, which one has been accustomed to consider as the limit.

Though I have occasionally noticed several particulars in which I conceive the character of our blessed Lord to have been defectively represented, I cannot close the subject of his morality without adverting to the general manner in which the author speaks of him. He is represented as *a good man*, and a large catalogue of moral virtues is attributed to him; it is also observed, that there is a singular expression used by him, “a singularity in “Christ’s language” is the appellation of the “Son of Man.”—And is this all from a Divine of the Church of England? Is there nothing in those expressions which if not direct truth were direct blasphemy? Is it so singular that he should use an appellation given before to Ezekiel, as that he should say, *I am the Son of God*. He evidently made use of the former because it is the name by which Daniel had prophesied of him, (Chap. vii. 13)

in the book on which the Jews at that time founded their immediate expectations of a Messiah; and that passage, which being in the Chaldee, they did probably the more generally refer to. It was a direct appeal to the prophet. But that of the Son of God, was surely in itself more strange, as it was without example; and beyond all daring but that of the truth, or of a character the most inconsistent with, or regardless of it. As this is passed over, so are his attributes of Creator and Redeemer of man. That none but the Creator could be a Redeemer; that none, but he who made, could restore man to his original state of relative perfection, and remedy the effects of an error infecting him from his origin, I readily conceive; but why, amidst the distinctions of his office and his excellencies, these should find no place, when delineated by the hand that has subscribed to a belief of them, I am at a loss to determine. On these the Apostles ground their motives to obedience and to brotherly love. On these they ground the consolation of the feeble, and the reliance of the strong; and with the just sentiment that a perfect being requires relative perfection in his creatures, and has supplied

plied their deficiencies by a title, which, while it exempts from punishment, leaves to sin the mark of abhorrence set upon it; founds his future happiness, not in the pride of his own nature, but in the mercies of his God; in accepting imperfect services as perfect, for the sake of a Mediator,

I have yet to endeavour to vindicate the character of the Apostles from some charges, which are by the author left in a great degree attached to them; the charges of erroneous opinions,

The first of these is, "*that quotations of the Old Testament found in the new, are applied in a sense and to events apparently different from that which they bear, and from those to which they belong in the original.*"

Page 298. As to this, it requires very little knowledge of the Jewish writings to know, that they abound with what the author calls *accommodations*. How far the critical application affects the apostolic, depends upon the question, were they always inspired? St. Paul has been careful to express in some things that he delivered them, not as of inspiration, but

as matter of private opinion. He has also desired Timothy to *study* the Scriptures, which to one constantly inspired would have been needless. Their opinion is therefore merely such, wherever it is asserted to be so. But what are these critical errors? Why is the negation of their affecting their credibility, as historians, connected with the indefinite supposition that there may be such? When left to imagination, what may not be the conception of their magnitude? What though the ablest men have been convinced that there is no just cause of offence, must the stumbling block thus be in the way of the ignorant? Does the author believe there are such critical mistakes? and, if so, which are they, and In this I ask, which are the improper comparisons, or invalid arguments, introduced by St. Paul, in the discussion of the call of the Gentiles? Are the Apostles wrong because they are not understood? Surely it was incumbent on the author to specify the particulars, that the magnitude of the error might appear distinct in its place, and not thus be permitted to wave over every difficulty, as indolence or a love of evil may incline it. By the instance which follows, let
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it be estimated in others alluded to; and I doubt not but the words of Grotius will be verified, "that in whatever is of importance, " whether as to doctrine, or historical fact, " there is every where a most evident agree- " ment, beyond what is found in any other " writers whatsoever, who are of one sect." De Veritate-Rel C, Lib. 3. c. 13.

With respect to the day of judgement, it is repeatedly declared, by our Lord himself, that *none* could know the time *but the Father*. This is mentioned by three of the Evangelists. It is therefore idle, and frivolous in the extreme, to draw any inference whatsoever from their expressions concerning it. It was declared, that in its appearance it would be *sudden* and *unexpected*. This was misunderstood for a speedy appearance; and it was *then* revealed that there must first be an apostacy. What might be the duration of this apostacy it was not easy to determine. It is material to observe, that in the scheme of prophecy, the immediately approaching period is distinct, the subsequent is concisely stated, and unfolded in a new revelation. To apply this. In the prophecy of Daniel, there is a no men-
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tion of a series of events between the cutting off of the Messiah, and his second coming, which seems to require a long period; much less is there in Isaiah. Even St. Paul seems to have considered Antichrist as one person, rather than one political power, or corporation sole. The natural conclusion was, that such an interval might be not very long, especially as its length *was not to be known*. So far therefore are the Apostles free from the charge of an erroneous an opinion, that in fact they neither could give, nor have given any, but their apprehension of what *might* be.

They have in the holy Scriptures related a series of facts; and delivered a system of doctrines, with full proof of their veracity, and their authority; in the language intelligible and customary in the country where they wrote; and many things have been obscured by the difference of manners, and distance of time. Of these, a great part have been, by repeated attentions, cleared up; it is therefore more just, as well as more liberal, to hope the like, if a few remain that seem such, than to allow them to be fallible without proof; and more especially in St. Paul's argument,

guments, in which there is little hazard in saying, that no one argues more strictly or accurately. Let him be judged by sound criticism, and a just taste, and no one will merit a more ample confidence. That there are some things in his Epistles hard to be understood was allowed by an Apostle; but they are not therefore not true, or not to be understood. I will venture to assert, that no writer is less in need of Dr. Burnet's saving rule, p. 304; no writer more consistent with himself. From a professed advocate of Christianity, it is more dangerous, if it be not necessary, to admit of such objections. God forbid that we should wish to prop up the apostolic authority by idle assertion of whatever may appear serviceable to it, on the absurd idea that we are competent judges of what a revelation ought to contain; or on any other idea than the true state of the case; but God forbid also, that we should hazard, or give up the truth. The many illustrations of difficulties, introduced in the View of the Evidences of Christianity, are a sufficient caution against giving up a passage because it is not immediately understood. A peculiar mode of consideration, a particular point of view, a new source of information, may

accomplish what has not yet been done; why then give it up? Is it not enough, not to insist on it farther than what is immediately evident? What the unbeliever has a right to ask is, whether all that is necessary to be known, *as a means of salvation*, is clear and express; and whether there is a sufficient evidence of its truth, internally and externally? Of the internal evidence, the excellence of the morality, and the sound judgement of the Apostles, are the great supports. I have endeavoured to shew that both of these are well founded. That the words which Jesus spake were such as never man spake; and that his Apostles deserve credit for the word's sake.

If the morality of the Gospel be compared with that of modern Philosophers, it will be found to differ essentially in one particular; that instead of opposing claim to claim, and right to right, it opposes benevolence to benevolence; and love to love; it does not rouse to the combat, but it makes the weapons needless. Instead of partial principles, which vanity alone could dictate, and ambition, lust and avarice approve, or act upon, its principles

ples are founded on a thorough knowledge of human nature, in opposition to its depravity.

It has been the affectation of many modern philosophers, and unwisely imitated by others less ill intentioned, to descant with emphasis on pure *morality*, and the artifice has its use. The attention is turned to society, as it exists in this life, and man is made the object of his own care. By avoiding the word *religion*, the omnipresence of the Supreme Being is suffered to be left out of immediate reflection, and the first table of the decalogue to fade from the memory. In the mouth of a Christian, pure *religion* should give force to its own law; and with every duty call to mind the God who enjoins it to be performed. And, if ever there was a time for enforcing it thus, the present is one. Let the savage consequences of modern philosophy be the test. Let the weakness of our religious profession assert it. Let it be read in the contempt of the laws against prophaneness, and the neglect of divine worship; in the decrees of the courts of justice, against the vices that tend the most to destroy all religion; in the numbers of the trials for the most shameful violations of
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family peace; in the excesses of the wealthy that provoke the imitation, and curb the means of those in middle stations; in the selfishness that has almost destroyed that reciprocal adherence, which is the surest bond of national peace; in the folly of imagining wealth to be a sure and lasting power, without personal attachment or regard; and the folly still greater of confounding the power to do mischief, with the knowledge of doing good. Against this general principle of selfishness, it is the duty of every Christian to turn the morality of the Gospel; to demonstrate its truth and vindicate its honour from the misrepresentation of its friends as well as from the calumnies of its enemies, and may the God who has given, confirm it in perfection.

FINIS.

